

Decent Social Dealings with Children in the perspective of Practical Morals of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W)

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ABSTRACT

It is absolutely clear that love of children exists by nature in the heart of their parents. To bear pains in the care of their children, to express mercy and kindness upon them and manage all their necessities and issues is firmly embedded in the hearts and minds of the parents. Assuming that if it were not so, human race would have become extinct on the planet. The holy *Qur'ān* rightly terms children as the adornment and beauty of the world. Allāh says in the holy *Qur'ān*: "Wealth and offspring are a source of brilliance of the world". (*Al-Qur'ān*) The most valuable sentiments ordained by Allāh in the hearts of the parents include mercifulness, kindness, love and affection which bear great influence in the growth, training and flourishing of children, and produce tremendous outcomes. That is why the sacred Islamic laws strengthen the sentiment of affection and love in the hearts of people. These laws inspire all the elders whether they are teachers, elite, parents or heads of any field, to adopt these attributes. The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh says: "He who is not merciful upon the young and does not recognize the rights of the elders, is not from amongst us." The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh further says: "He who bears no mercy on other, he is not also treated with mercy." (*Al-Hadīth*).

Therefore, the trainers must take the above sayings of the Messenger (S.A.W) as guidance, and exercise equity and fairness between boys and girls so as to deserve the paradise that is larger than the heavens and the earth, and also to obtain the greatest wealth in the form of the will and liking of Allāh.

Key Words: Social Dealings, Children, Affection, Kindness

Since hearts of parents are filled with the true and pure love, affection, softness and kindness for their children, it is important to keep in view that these sentiments are there for the sake of Allāh because all the principles of Islam

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prevail over all sentiments and necessities. Moreover, establishing an Islamic social order is the primary objective of every believer and the real purpose of life because the key desire of a Muslim is to lead the deviated humanity to the right path, and in doing so a Muslim sacrifices all he has. The Messenger (S.A.W.) of Allāh has said: "No one from you can become a perfect believer unless I become more beloved to him than his wealth, children and all other people." (*Al-Hadīth*)

It may be clearly understood that besides arranging for education and training, it is also the responsibility of the parents to treat their children with decency and fine behavior, by calling them with kindness and love, advising them with affection; observing equality and justice in their food and attire according to their capacity, and treating all children equally. They need to avoid the discrimination usually practiced between boys and girls.

There are several other verses in the Holy *Qur'ān* which are reflective of the feelings and sentiments of parents which they have towards their children. These verses reveal the truth and sincerity of the parent's love and affection for their children.

Allāh says in the holy *Qur'ān*:

*"The wealth and children (are) adornment (of) the life (of) the world."*¹

المال والبنون زينة الحياة الدنيا

At another place Allāh declares it (children) a great blessing which deserves gratitude. Allāh says:

وامددنكم باموال و بنين و جعلنكم اكثر نفيراً

*"And We reinforced you with wealth and sons and made you more numerous in manpower".*²

And if these children are pious and law-abiding, they are declared coolness of eyes. The *Qur'ān* says:³

والذين يقولون ربنا هب لنا من ازواجنا وذرياتنا قرة اعين واجعلنا للمتقين اماماً

"And who say: Our Lord! Vouchsafe us comfort of our wives and of our offspring, and make us patterns for (all) those who ward off (evil)".

Affection and Kindness towards Children: A Divine Gift

The most valuable sentiments ordained by Allāh in the hearts of the parents include mercifulness, kindness, love and affection which bear great influence in the growth, training and flourishing of children, and produce tremendous outcomes. That is why

the sacred Islamic laws strengthen the sentiment of affection and love in the hearts of people. These laws inspire all the elders whether they are teachers, elite, parents or heads of any field, to adopt these attributes.

The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh says:

ليس منا من لم يرحم صغيرنا و لم يعرف حق كبيرنا

*"He who is not merciful upon the young and does not recognize the rights of the elders, is not from amongst us."*⁵

The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh further says:

من لا يرحم لا يرحم

*"He who bears no mercy on other, he is not also treated with mercy".*⁶

In Al-Adab-al-Mufrad, Imam Bukhārī (R.A) narrates Anas bin Mālik (R.A) that a woman brought two of her kids to 'Āisha (R.A) who gave her three dates. The woman gave one date to each of the children and kept the third for herself. Both the kids ate up their dates and started looking to their mother. The mother divided her date equally into two pieces and gave one piece to each of the two kids. When the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh arrived home, 'Āisha (R.A) told her the story at which the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh said:

و ما يعجبك من ذلك لقد رحمها الله برحمتها صبيها

"Why are you surprised? Allāh also had mercy upon the woman as she had mercy upon her children."

It is therefore worth remembering that parents perform their responsibilities and duties towards the upbringing and care of their children just on the basis of their spirit of kindness for them. This responsibility is ordained by Allāh.⁷

Islam is the faith that teaches equality and fairness. In the case of kindness towards children there is no distinction between man and woman. If we see in the Muslim society some parents who practice a discriminatory attitude towards girls as compared to boys, this is nothing but an evil practice of the dark ages about which Allāh says⁸:

و اذا بشر احدهم بالانثى ظل وجهه مسودا و هو كظيم يتوارى من القوم من سوء ما بشر به

ايمنسكه على هون ام يدسه في التراب ساء ما يحكمون

Translation: "And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of

the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide."

The reason for such attitude is feebleness of faith and unstable confidence as the attitude shows that such parents are not pleased with the decision of Allāh Who gifted them with a daughter.

Some notable instructions of the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh concerning the care, special attention and decent treatment of girls are given below. The Messenger (S.A) of Allāh said:

من عال جاريتين حتى تبلغا جاء يوم القيامة أنا و هو كهاتين و ضم اصابعه

"He who arranges the needs of two girls till they acquire adulthood, such person will be presented on the Day of Judgment in a way that I (S.A) and he will be like this (and the Messenger (S.A) of Allāh showed two of his fingers joined together."

The Messenger (S.A.W) also said:

من كانت له ثلاث بنات فصبر عليهن و سقاهن و كساهن من جدته أى ماله كن له حجابا من النار

"He who has three daughters and he treats them nicely, feed and dress them from his wealth, such daughters will be a source of salvage for that man from the hell."

Therefore, those (parents) who train their children must maintain equality and fairness between their sons and daughters so as to deserve the paradise which is wider than the heavens and the earth, and so that they could win the pleasure of Allāh, which is the greatest treasure.⁹

Reward for Patience at the Death of Child

Having acquired a high level of faith, a Muslim keeps a strong belief in the fortune which makes it convenient for him to face hardships and tests. Such a Muslim bows his head before every decision the Creator sets for his life. For this kind of a faithful Muslim, the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh has told a good tiding that when a child of someone dies, Allāh asks the angels whether they have seized the soul of that man's child. The answer is in affirmation. They are asked whether they have seized the soul of the most beloved son of that man. They answer in positive. They are asked what that man did (when the soul departed from the body of the child). They respond that the man praised Allāh and said:

Allāh commands: Build a house for my slave in the paradise and name this house بيت الحمد (the house of praise).

This patience bears many benefits one of which is that it serves as a source of

taking one to the paradise and saving from the hell. The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh said:

ما منكن امرأة يموت لها ثلاثة من الولد إلا كانوا حجاباً من النار، فقالت امرأة: واثنان؟
قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: واثنان.

Translation: *There is none among you women whose three children die and that they will become a source of his safety against the hell; One of the women said: If two children die, then? The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh said: The two as well (will save her from hell).*

It is therefore important for parents to strengthen their faith and use this force of faith and confidence whenever confronted with distress, and in the case their child dies, they should not lose their heart but observe patience so that Allāh Who is the supreme and absolute master of everything, would bestow upon him His reward and blessings.¹⁰

Preferring Islamic principles and directives over Child's love

Since hearts of parents are filled with the true and pure love, affection, softness and kindness for their children, it is important to keep in view that these sentiments are there for the sake of Allāh because all the principles of Islam prevail over all sentiments and necessities. Moreover, establishing an Islamic social order is the primary objective of every believer and the real purpose of life because the key desire of a Muslim is to lead the deviated humanity to the right path, and in doing so a Muslim sacrifices all he has. The Messenger (S.A.W.) of Allāh has said:

لا يؤمن أحدكم حتي أكون أحب إليه من والده وولده والناس أجمعين

Translation: *"No one from you can become a perfect believer unless I become more beloved to him than his wealth, children and all other people."*¹¹

Punishing a child for the sake of training and reform

Islamic teaching bear peculiar manner to train and develop a child. According to these teachings, the trainer or mentor must not overlook or have any objection to teaching the child with affection and kindness if this work. It is not fair to beat a child when he or she can be dealt better by just scolding or strictness. However, where verbal advice and scolding fail to be effective in the training and mentoring of the child, the child may be beaten to a reasonable extent which should not be brutal or harsh. May be by using this method the trainer or mentor

could improve the character and attitude of the child.¹²

Inappropriate dealing by parents with their children

Scholars concerned with the field of training have almost come to a consensus that if parents or trainers treat, scold and humiliate a child during his/her training, the reaction will reflect in the habits, ethics and moral attitude of the child. There is also the possibility that a child could commit suicide, quarrel with the parents, involve even in murder or run away from his/her home to get rid of brutal strictness and the pains of beating.¹³

In this direction, Allāh says in the holy *Qur'ān*:

ان الله يامر بالعدل والاحسان و آتاء ذى القربى

Translation: *Indeed, Allāh commands justice and the good, and giving (to) relatives*

At another place Allāh commands:

والكاظمين الغيظ والعافين عن الناس والله يحب المحسنين

Translation: *"those who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind; Allāh loved the good."*

On another occasion the divine teachings say:

وقولوا للناس حسنا

Translation: *"And speak kindly to mankind "*

In this concern, the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh has said:

إن الله يحب الرفق فى الأمر كله

Translation: *Allāh likes kindness in every matter.*

The Messenger (S.A.W) on another occasion says:

إن أراد الله تعالى بأهل بيت خيرا أدخل عليهم الرفق و

إن الرفق لو كان خلقا لما رأى الناس خلقا أحسن منه و إن العنف لو كان خلقا لما رأى الناس خلقا أقبح منه

Translation: *"Whenever Allāh intends to be kind to inhabitants of a home, He develops softness and kindness in them, and if softness and kindness were a sort of creature it would be so beautiful that people would have not seen anything creature more beautiful than it; and if harshness were in the form of a creature, it would be so ugly that no creature would have been seen uglier than it."*

These teachings give the message that parents need to observe compassion,

elegance and kindness in treating their children. In the case otherwise, it is too hard to rule out that the children will develop disobedience, arrogance and deviated for which it will be the parents to be held responsible.

Books authored on the holy life of the Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W) reveal that once Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyān (R.A) became angry with his son Yazīd and sent a man to Aḥnaf b. Qais to learn his opinion about the children. He said, our children are the fruit of our hearts and a source of our support while we are like an even ground and a shading heaven. So, if they demand from you something, you should give to them, and if they get angry with you, you should compromise to please them because in return they will reward you with their affection and the fruit of their love; and do not be harsh on them or they will fed up with your life and wish your death.¹⁷

Kind treatment and nice behavior towards children

It may be noted that besides arranging for education and training, it is also the responsibility of the parents to treat their children with decency and fine behavior, by calling them with kindness and love, advising them with affection; observing equality and justice in their food and attire according to their capacity, and treating all children equally. They need to avoid the discrimination usually practiced between boys and girls.¹⁸

Rights of Children

Children also have rights upon their parents fulfillment of which is the duty of the parents exactly as the parents have rights upon their children and the children are obliged to pay these rights. The two-way rights are to be essentially paid quite decently. Islam is the faith that has restricted rights of the elders through rights of the younger ones. Prior to Islam, children had no rights upon their father and perhaps it was so because it was traditional to give preference to parents. But the Muḥammadan law observes no difference in the rights of the elders and the children. Accordingly, the children have some rights on their elders just as the elders have rights on their children. The Messenger (S.A.W) has defined this instruction in a brief sentence which we may term as a principle for the elders and the children:

من لم يرحم صغيرنا و لم يعرف حق كبيرنا فليس منا

Translation: "He who is not merciful upon the young and does not recognize the rights of the elders, is not from amongst us."

This in fact is the tenet on which rests the basis of mutual rights of the elders and the children. If this principle is properly observed, it has the potential to remove bitterness and displeasure between junior and senior officers, between master and servants and between elders and their children.²⁰

A few examples of affection and kindness of the Messenger Muḥammad (S.A.W) towards children

(1) Once the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh was in prayers with people when Ḥussain (R.A.) came there. He (S.A.W) was in prostration when Ḥussain (R.A) sat on his neck. The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh prolonged his prostration so much that people around him doubted that something untoward had happened. When he (S.A.W) completed his prayer, the companions (R.A) said: "O' Messenger of Allāh, you remained in prostration so long that we thought something might have gone wrong. The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh said: *'My son had got on my neck and I did not like to stand up early, depriving him of his joy'*.

(2) It is described in Kitab-al-Aṣḥabah that the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh used to play and enjoy with his grandsons Hasan (R.A.) and Ḥussain (R.A) and in doing that he (S.A.W) would walk on his hands and feet while the two of them would embrace him (S.A.W) and he (S.A.W) would pick both of them up and move around and say *"Your camel is the best camel and you two are the best riders"*.

(3) He (S.A.W) would say: When I hear them cry I cut my prayers short because I know how their mother will feel when she hears them cry.

(4) It is narrated to Anas (R.A) that he passed by some children and said greetings and told the children that the Messenger (S.A.W) used to greet children.

(5) According to a narration when people saw the first fruit (of the season) they would bring it to the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh. He (S.A.W) would take it in his hand and would pray:

اللهم بارك لنا في ثمرنا و بارك لنا في مدينتنا و بارك لنا في صاعنا و بارك لنا في مدنا

Translation: *O' Allāh, give us prosperity in our fruits and in our town and in our Sā' and in Mudd.*

Without any shade of doubt, these prayers of the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh advocate kindness and affection towards children, and are example for the Muslims to follow this holy behavior of the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh and

practice his tradition.²¹

Hence, it is a human nature to love children, and treat them with affection and kindness, and when this is practiced considering this attitude as the practice of the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh, it becomes a phenomenon of good deed and ethical and moral training.²²

INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT PHYSICAL TRAINING OF CHILDREN

Physical training of children in the light of the Holy *Qur'ān* and Sayings of the Messenger (S.A.W)

The holy *Qur'ān* and sayings of the Messenger (S.A.W) are not silent about the way physical training is to be conducted. It must be very clearly noted that our misunderstanding that there is no such mention in the holy *Qur'ān* or the *Hadīth*, is a wrong conception. I hope this research paper gives an understanding that Islamic teachings cover every aspect of life, and there is no filed of life left without instruction or advice. Islam is not restricted to prayers and fasting but it enfolds the entire life of a man and a believer. *Ahadīth* (sayings of the Messenger (S.A.W) comprise the principles as to how a physical training should be conducted, and how spiritual and beliefs training should be arranged. The holy *Qur'ān* points to these aspects which the Messenger (S.A.W) has also clearly stated as to what kind of moral training should be there.

Every child is faced with the possibility to deteriorate, to follow a right way and to learn. Childhood needs great care and well-conducted training. As for physical training, I would say that it is a great blessing from Allāh that we generally take much care about it. Most of us are attentive about the physical growth and training of our children and the methods of training. We do make all possible efforts for such training, however, it is important to mention a few notable points described in the holy *Qur'ān* and the sayings of the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh.²³

Observance of Moderation in Physical Training

This refers that there should be neither any neglect in the physical training of a child and family members, nor should there be any lavish expenses in the physical training. There should be a balance, a moderation in this matter. Hence, the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh says:

لينفق ذو سعة من سعته و من قدر عليه رزقه فلينفق مما آتاه الله

Translation: "Whoever can afford should expend according to his capacity and if

someone falls short in subsistence, such person should spend according to his capacity, and spend from what Allāh has given him. "

Managing subsistence is not within the control of man. What is destined for him, he will get anyway, and efforts for something above that what is written for him, shall stay unsuccessful. Division of wealth and resources in the world is so uneven that on one side there are some well off and rich people while a large majority comprises the poor and the helpless masses who cannot get even proper basic needs. About food and maintenance of the family members and children as well as their physical training, the holy *Qur'ān* instructs: لينفق ذو سعة من

سعته that is he who can afford should spend according to his capacity and provide for food and maintenance without causing any inconvenience. There are some people who are miser despite having wealth and affordability but they neither spend on themselves nor on their families as much as they ought to, rather do they keep their families in destitution. The holy *Qur'ān* and the Islamic teachings forbid this kind of attitude.

Next it said: ومن قدر عليه رزقه that is, If someone faces challenges of subsistence, then فلينفق مما آتاه الله that is, he should pay for food and maintenance from what Allāh has given him. After that a principle is provided: لا يكلف الله نفساً إلا ما آتاه سيجعل

الله بعد عسر يسراً that is, Allāh does not burden anyone beyond what He has given him, so Allāh will soon bestow convenience after hardship.' Hence, there is no need to take loans or to beg for expenses beyond one's capacity. The message of سيجعل الله بعد عسر يسراً communicates the good tiding that hardship will soon be over and replaced with prosperity. We can see that the meanings are the same as defined earlier that one should spend according to the capacity given by Allāh. One should spend on his family, and in case he finds it hard to afford, he should expend again according to his capacity. It is not reasonable to be extravagant when resources are available. Exceeding limits in the spending may also spoil the children. You might have observed or experienced this sort of things. Nor is it proper to pull one's hand from what should be spent. Expenses should be maintained in moderation so that neither the family should feel trouble nor should they look to others. They should be provided enough so that they do not

feel greedy about anything.

The holy *Qur'ān* offers an excellent principle for physical training and for affording food and maintenance. In brief, this principle advises a moderate attitude to adopt; it advises neither to be miser nor to be lavish so as to spoil the morals of the children. The mentors and the trainers are well aware of this principle.²⁵

Healthcare of Children: An Essential Matter

One of the sayings of the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh states: كفى بالمرء إثماً أن يضيع من

يقوت This means that it is a major sin for a man that he should destroy by being miser in what he can afford (food and maintenance). This refers that he keeps his hands so tight in the matter of spending for food and maintenance of his children that they deteriorate physically as well as morally. This is really a big sin. Children are healthy and sometimes they fall sick as well. When they fall sick, we attend to their treatment and do whatever we can. These efforts is also advised in the divine law, in accordance with the Islamic teachings and reflecting our sentiments; sentiments of every father and every mother who want appropriate treatment of their child to see him well as fast as possible. One of the *Ahadīth* describes that Allāh has created medication for every disease and ailment in the world:

لم ينزل الله داء إلا و أنزل معه الدواء إلا الحرام

(Translation:) "*There is no sickness for which Allāh has not provided a treatment*". It is further stated that when the medicine suits the disease, it cures the disease, and if medicine is not suitable, it does not cure the disease. Then the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh says: "There is, however, a disease for which there is no medicine". The companions (R.A.) asked as to which disease that was. The Messenger (S.A.) of Allāh said: "It is the old age which has got no cure. Old age end up at death. There is no such medicine that turns an old man into a young man; there is no medication to rejuvenate an old person to live once again the life of a youth."

The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh advises that when someone falls sick, the patient should consult such doctor or physician who has the knowledge of the disease and the right medicine and treatment of that disease. When this is so, God willing, the treatment will be successful. One should not consult an

inexperienced and incompetent person as such person will probably deteriorate the illness further. That is why it is said about doctors that: Half knowledge is dangerous for life.

There is another *Hadīth* to be mentioned here (and which is often neglected) which points out to the fact that we should observe and practice those methods which keep our families healthy and maintain our affection and love. In other words we should protect ourselves against diseases and likewise keep our children protected.²⁶

The Night of Diseases

It is mentioned in the *Sahih Bukhari* that the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh said: During the year such a night comes (of which we are not aware) in which diseases are sent down from heavens; these diseases approach every house and enter in the utensils kept open; and when someone uses these utensils in this condition, would fall sick. In the present day life it is easy to comprehend that germs of different diseases enter the utensils which if used unwashed cause the germs enter into our stomach through food or drink thereby causing sickness. This phenomenon is quite generally observable. The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh goes on to advise that each utensil should be properly placed and covered; and if there is nothing to cover an empty utensil it should be kept upside down; and if you do not find a proper cover, cover the utensil with anything else, particularly those utensils in which food is kept, must be properly covered. This care will God willing provide protection against diseases. Assuming that if the utensils remain uncovered due to forgetfulness, it should not be used unless properly washed. This will also save God willing against disease. We observe that many people do not pay attention to this care. At time there are many flies which sit on the utensils leaving the germs behind. These germs cause different diseases. So, great care needs to be taken in this concern.

Then there are some seasons in which it is harmful for health to each unripe vegetables and fruits. Even the ripe fruit that is bought from bazars are very likely to be harmful if eaten unwashed. Many a time it happens that children buy some eatable from a shop and eat it unwashed and unclean. They fall sick due to this practice. The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh drew attention to cleanliness and advised people and their families to prevent the causes of sickness, and to take proper care of good health and staying healthy. Similar care is advised for children's health. There is another instruction from the Messenger (S.A.W) of

Allāh concerning children's health.²⁷

The Secret of Protecting Children's Health

The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh advised that one should take meal on feeling sufficient hunger, and to stop eating when still feeling a bit hungry. He (S.A.W) forbade eating after having dined. This advice is for all of us including our children. Even all the doctors will tell the consequences of overeating. Balanced diet habits save against diseases. Sheikh Sa'adī in his "Gulistan" describing an event writes that a king who had embraced Islam came to learn that during the period of Muhammad (S.A.W.), there was no traditional physician or doctor in the city of Medina. As a gesture of goodwill and sympathy he sent a physician from his country. This physician stayed in Medina for a year but remained nearly free, not having even a single patient. He was very surprised that in a large population of Medina, there was no patient to come to him for treatment. He asked the people as to how they protected themselves against sickness. The companions (R.A) replied that they used to eat only when they were very hungry, and stopped eating when some hunger was still there. Hearing this, the physician packed his stuff and left from there saying that it was too difficult for them to get sick (due to eating habits).

The same principle is equally good for us. This we know and so do our families. As for children, they usually accept to eat whenever they find something without observing whether they are hungry or not. It is the responsibility of the parents to control the children and stop them, particularly, from eating things that could harm their health.²⁸

Exercise and Practice

Islam underlines a number of important and beneficial activities which help people in the society maintain their health through physical exercise and training. One of these activities is that people (especially the youth) should be engaged in physical training, martial training and physical exercises keeping in view their availability and conditions. This is so because through its excellent basic principles and highest teachings Islam ensures that the Muslims take proper care of the training of their physical as well as spiritual health and fitness. It is therefore important that when a child acquires the age of maturity, both his physical and spiritual health should be taken care of. In this course, in his free time he should be engaged in such interesting activities which keep him physically healthy, strengthening his physique and keeping him fit and smart all

the time. This is to be done for three reasons:

1. To keep the child engaged in his free time.
2. To protect him against various diseases.
3. To develop in him the habit of physical exercise and fitness activities right from his childhood.

It is a humble message for the mentors and the trainers that Islam is the only eternal faith that inspires its followers to acquire honor, strength through healthy physical activities and preparation for war against the evil. Allāh says in the *Qur'ān*:

واعدوا لهم ما استطعتم من قوة ومن رباط الخيل ترهبون به عدو الله وعدوكم

Translation: *"Make ready for them all thou canst of (armed) force and of horses tethered, that there by ye may dismay the enemy of Allāh and your enemy."* (29)

The Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W) of Allāh has said:

المؤمن القوى خير و أحب إلى الله من المؤمن الضعيف

Translation: *"Strong believers are better and more beloved to Allāh than the weak believer."*

The leader of the believers Umar b. Al-Khaṭṭab (R.A) once wrote to his officers:

"After praising the Almighty Allāh (I wish to say that) make your children learn arrow shooting and horse-riding."

Aayesha (R.A) says that the Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W.) of Allāh competed with me in a sprint in which I remained ahead. After some time I gained some weight. The Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W.) of Allāh again competed the race with me and took the lead this time, and said that it was the response to the earlier race.

The Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W.) of Allāh had said:

إن حقا على الله أن لا يرفع شيئا من الدنيا إلا وضعه

(Translation): *'This is the law of Allāh that whatever He gives a rise He gives it decline as well.'*

These sayings of the Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W.) of Allāh make it clear that games and martial activities based on physical exercise, for example, wrestling, race, arrow shooting, horse-riding etc., are considered fair in Islam in order to enable the Muslims adopt the manners leading to superiority and victory as well as to get training to attain bravery, strength and prepare for the war. (30)

Race competition

Sprints are a sort of permitted games which the companions (R.A.) also practiced. The Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W.) of Allāh never forbade them to do so. Rather, the Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W.) of Allāh would himself compete with his dear wife 'Āisha (R.A) in sprint, to please her and as a lesson for the companions (R.A). Similar races should be conducted for competition among children.³¹

Physical Training

It is the duty of parents to inspire their children to acquiring physical training, especially learning karate. They also teach them to behave decently with people and use their merits to benefit others instead of committing any excess. Fathers should make their children learn horse-riding and swimming, and take them for learning arrow-shooting and target-hitting at places specific for the purpose so that by the time a child turn adult he should be prepared for martial activities.

Umar (R.A.) says: علموا أولادكم الرماية والسباحة و ركوب الخيل

Translation: *"Each of your children arrow-shooting, swimming and horse-riding."*
There are several sayings of the Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W) of Allāh in this regard, for example, the Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W) of Allāh said:

كل شيء ليس من ذكر الله فهو لهو أو سهو إلا أربع خصال:

مشى الرجل بين الغرضين و تأديبه فرسه وملاعبة أهله و تعليمه السباحة

Translation: *"Every activity lacking the name of Allāh, is worthless or is an error except four things: walking between two places of targets; training of horse-riding; being cheerful with one's wife and learning swimming".*

The Messenger Muhammad (S.A.W) of Allāh recited this verse:

واعدو لهم ما استطعتم من قوة

Translation: *"Keep your strength prepared as far as possible against your enemies".*

He (S.A.W) further said:

ألا إن القوة الرمي، ألا إن القوة الرمي، ألا إن القوة الرمي

Translation: *"Listen, strength means arrow-shooting, listen again, strength means arrow-shooting, and listen, strength means arrow-shooting".*

Therefore, it is duty of every Muslim father to encourage his children, provide

them physical training so that it bears a good effect on their health. He should also make them learn different physical arts, especially arrow-shooting, target-hitting and swimming. Islam does not forbid playing football provided that it is played under discipline and not much time is consumed in this game. However, such physical exercises as described above should aim at preparing the Muslims for any possible war. The Almighty Allāh has allowed this sort of preparation and active participation to the Muslim community with all honor, respect and blessings.³⁴

Care of the physical aspects of a Child

This refers to keeping in view the principles of hygiene explained in the Islamic teachings with regard to habits of food, sleeping etc. The trainer or mentor should save the child from indigestion, stop from over eating and from untimely eating. A child should be taught to drink water in two or three installments, forbid the child to exhale into the drink utensil, to drinking while standing and to drink with left hand. As for going to bed, the child should be advised to lie on one side and not to lie down immediately after eating. In short the trainer needs to keep in view all things that deteriorate body and destroy health, for example, things causing numbness, drugs, smoking cigarettes, masturbation, adultery and homosexuality etc. He should also consult a doctor on observing symptoms of some disease. That is why the Messenger (S.A.W) of Allāh says:

يا عباد الله تداووا فإن الله عز و جل لم يضع داء إلا وضع له شفاء

Translation: "O' slaves of Allāh, take treatment because Allāh has not sent any disease for which medicine has not also been sent."

Therefore, when a child is treated on Islamic pattern, he will be protected against various sicknesses and get rid of a number of threats and diseases that could be faced in time to come.³⁵

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